



## Public Safety Communications Highlights

- Don't forget! The Montana APCO Chapter's conference is this week, June 13-14, at the Great Falls Holiday Inn. Plan to attend PSSB-sponsored sessions on narrowbanding, NECP Goal #2 Reporting, and a 9-1-1 Program Update. For more information, visit: [www.mtapco.org](http://www.mtapco.org).
- With great sadness we report that Norman Parrent, former DES District 4 Representative, passed away on May 27. He was an active member of the Eastern Tier Interoperability Consortium and a great public safety advocate.
- The Application Period for FY 2012 Assistance to Fire Fighters Grants opens Mon., June 11, 6:00 am MST. Visit <http://www.fema.gov/firegrants/> for more info.
- Montana NECP communications capabilities reporting hits 86% compliance! (See related article)

## SWIC-DHS Support Moves Priority One of Montana's BIDP Grant Forward

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), through the Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) and their Lafayette Group Contractors, provided key facilitation leadership at a May 30-31 meeting in Whitefish to support the Border Interoperability Demonstration Project (BIDP) grant. The support was requested by the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), Warren Dupuis, in cooperation with Flathead County, BIDP grant recipient.

The meeting's objective was to address completion of Montana's BIDP grant applications' Priority 1, which states: "The Northern Tier in partnership with the State of Montana will pursue an agreement to allow Canadian, Federal, tribal, provincial, state and local responders to utilize Montana's 'BLUE' mutual aid channel (National VLA31) for mutual U.S./Canadian border operations."

The meeting brought together representatives of the State of Montana, Flathead County, Province of Alberta, Province of Saskatchewan, and the Department of Homeland Security to discuss key



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issues involving use of this frequency in a conventional, simplex mode. Several assignments resulted from the meeting, and a draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is being written with facilitator assistance. The goal, with additional coordination on both sides of the border, will be approval of acceptable procedures to use VLA31 as a tool for cross border communications. It will also provide a template to springboard into future Canadian/U.S. communications planning.

## FCC and APCO Narrowbanding Webcast Informative

The FCC/APCO narrowbanding webcast on Tues., June 5, revealed some important information to keep in mind about this federal mandate. Narrowbanding is an effort to ensure more efficient use of the VHF and UHF spectrum by requiring Land Mobile Radio (LMR) systems operating in the 150-174 MHz and 421-512 MHz bands to migrate to at least 12.5 kHz (narrowband) efficiency technology by January 1, 2013. Currently, the majority of UHF and VHF LMR licensees operate using 25 kHz (wideband) efficiency technology.

During the webcast, speakers Roberto Mussenden, FCC, Steve Makky Sr., APCO, reviewed some of the following key points:

- The January 1, 2013 deadline will not be extended.
- Licensees facing unique circumstances may request waivers, but these requests must clearly demonstrate a plan for reaching compliance within a certain time period.
- Narrowbanding does not require moving to another frequency band or different channels. Licensees stay on the same channel center(s), but reduce the bandwidth of the channel(s) currently used, from 25 kHz to 12.5 kHz and change the emission designator on the license.
- Do not have to upgrade to digital equipment to be in compliance. You simply need to reduce your occupied bandwidth.

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- You *do* have to update your FCC license by changing its emission designator.

The webcast also pointed out that all VHF/UHF equipment certified since 1997 has the capability of being narrowbanded or may even have dual 25 kHz/12.5 kHz capability. It will be important to check with vendors to determine whether existing equipment is narrowband-capable or needs modification and/or replacement.

Listeners were encouraged to visit the OEC/ICTAP Narrowband Status Map at: <http://publicsafetytools.info>. The map, which is updated frequently, provides a graphic representation of your area of interest. Here is a view of Montana's transmitter status.



Map of Montana Narrowband & Wideband Transmitters Key		
Symbol	Representation	No.
	Narrowband (12.5 kHz):	292
	Narrowband (12.5 kHz) & Wideband (25 kHz):	2194
	Wideband (25 kHz):	961
	Total Transmitters:	3817

The webcast is currently available for on-demand viewing by clicking [here](#):

## Planning Work on NE Billing Site Begins

Yellowstone County has initiated the planning work on the Northeast (NE) Billings Communications site. After a site visit, the site drawing was modified and sent to the City of Billings. The site layout has now been approved.

Microwave antenna sizes, locations and heights have been verified not only at this site, but also at the Coburn and Pompey's Pillar sites. Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation (EHP) screening forms for all three sites were completed and submitted.

Other planning work that has been undertaken includes reviews of site lease documents, site use agreements, FCC tower registrations, and site access agreements. In addition, microwave quotes and budget figures have been examined.

A complete Statement of Work for needed

infrastructure at the NE Billings site is in the process of being drafted.

## Word is Getting out about Montana's NECP Goal #2 Reporting Efforts

Many thanks are due to the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) for including a comprehensive article in its June newsletter about the need for counties to report on their ability to demonstrate response-level emergency communications during day-to-day or routine incidents, which is Goal # 2 of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). The article appears on pages 21-22 and is available by clicking [here](#).



Kudos are due as well to Charlie Hansen, Disaster and Emergency Services District 5 Representative, for including information about the reporting requirement in his *Montana Weekly DES Update* electronic newsletter. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

We're pleased to report that capability reporting is at the 86% compliance mark. The submission rate for the Performance Evaluation report stands at 52%. Congratulations go to Chuck Lee, DES, Fallon Co.; Sheriff Craig Doolittle, Jefferson Co.; Steve DiGiovanna, DES, Madison Co.; Chris Lounsbury, DES, Missoula Co.; Greg Speer, DES, Phillips Co.; LeAnn Hermance, DES, Pondera Co.; and Duane Winslow, DES, and Sheriff Mike Linder, Yellowstone Co., for submitting both of their reports since the last issue of the HAM was published!

These forms are needed to help establish a national baseline of standardized information about emergency communications from every county in the US. The study will provide the most comprehensive look at communications interoperability in the US ever collected. We are told that collection of this data will enable the State and Federal partners to better target resources and assistance to where support is needed most.

Click [here](#) for the capabilities questionnaire and [here](#) for the county performance survey. Completed reports should be e-mailed to Wing Spooner, [espooner@mt.gov](mailto:espooner@mt.gov). Anyone with questions is encouraged to call her at 406-444-2491.

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## **Frequency Coordination Committees Combine**

The International Municipal Signal Association/ International Association of Fire Chiefs (IMSA/IAFC) and the Forestry Conservation Communications Association (FCCA) have combined their frequency coordination activities in a new non-profit corporation named Public Safety Communications Associates (PSCA).

PSCA will be using the services of [FreqEasy](#) LLC for application processing. IMSA and IAFC's frequency-coordination applications may still be entered electronically at [SiteSafe on the IMSA website](#).

## **Upcoming Meetings**

- **Tues., June 12: *SIGB Meeting Cancelled***
- **Wed-Thurs., June 13-14: MT APCO Conference**  
Great Falls • All day  
Holiday Inn, 400 10th Ave. S.  
Visit [www.mtapco.org](http://www.mtapco.org) for more information.
- **Tues., June 19: State Agency Radio Users Task Force**  
Helena • 2:30 - 4:00 pm  
Mitchell Building, 125 N. Roberts, Rm. 160